



## **2004 Legislative Report** **Achievements for the 2nd District**

**State  
Representative**

**Roger Bush**

Serving the citizens of Carbonado, Eatonville, Frederickson, Graham, Orting, Rainier, South Hill, Spanaway, Yelm, and the Mt. Rainier area

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## **Budget addresses needs**

The Legislature adopts one operating budget every year. In odd-numbered years, it's the "large" spending plan for the next two years. In even-numbered years, such as this one, we adopt a "smaller" supplemental operating budget to address immediate, unforeseen needs.

This year, we focused our funding efforts on K-12 education, colleges, and programs for at-risk people.

### **Higher education**

We approved an additional \$23.9 million, including \$17.2 million for nearly 3,000 college enrollment slots, \$2.3 million for Promise Scholarships, \$4.5 million for student financial aid, plus \$115 million for new buildings.

### **K-12 education**

Nearly \$6 million was added to supplement our state's basic education budget. Our plan also provides \$9.5 million toward health benefits for school employees and \$5.5 million for a 1 percent cost-of-living increase for non-teaching school staff.

### **Health care**

The supplemental budget includes \$25 million for home caregivers, \$20.7 million for poor children's medical premiums, \$10 million for hospital charity care, and \$6.6 million for emergency room budgets.

### **Future concerns**

Although Washington's economy is steadily improving, tax receipts continue to lag behind. The state's revenue forecast indicates that we will be looking at a budget shortfall in 2005. The only question is, how much? We considered this question very seriously when adopting this budget, and increased spending only where we felt it necessary to improve job opportunities, address education needs, and to help children, developmentally-disabled people and the elderly.

## **Supplemental budget highlights**

- ✓ \$164.7 million net spending increase.
- ✓ 3,000 new higher education enrollments.
- ✓ A 50-cent-an-hour pay boost, plus health benefits for home caregivers.
- ✓ 1 percent cost-of-living pay increase for K-12 classified employees.
- ✓ \$80 million tax credits for job creation in high-tech and biotech businesses.
- ✓ Increased funding for nursing homes, children's Medicaid, and developmentally disabled citizens.
- ✓ **\$278 million left in emergency reserves with no new taxes.**

# Rep. Roger Bush

## Vital 2<sup>nd</sup> District transportation projects move forward

My efforts over the past several years to lay the groundwork for improved transportation in our district are now paying off through several projects:



**Cross-Base Highway** — Legislation we passed and that was signed by the governor designates the proposed Cross-Base Highway (State Route 704) as a “highway of statewide significance.” The designation moves the highway up on the priority list for construction and makes the project eligible for 90 percent of money raised through a regional funding package. The Cross-Base Highway would link Frederickson through Fort Lewis and McChord military bases to Interstate 5. It will relieve local traffic congestion and help job growth in the industrial area near Frederickson.

**Yelm Bypass** — I helped work to make sure your tax dollars come home through the supplemental transportation budget with the inclusion of \$1.2 million to design a Yelm bypass highway. The funding will allow property to be purchased and preliminary engineering to begin for a roadway that links State Routes 507 and 510 around Yelm’s north side.

**State Route 7-Pacific Avenue** — Construction is scheduled to begin late this summer on a safety improvement project on State Route 7 between SR 512 and SR 507 at the Roy wye (Y). New sidewalks, traffic signals, storm drainage and street lighting will be added.

**Meridian widening (State Route 161)** — As promised, this project from Puyallup’s South Hill to the base of Graham Hill is underway. It provides two travel lanes in each direction, plus a center turn lane and additional lights, which will help to relieve heavy traffic congestion.

## Local capital construction projects set in line

Major construction projects normally are not added to the capital budget in a supplemental budget year. Except for including \$115 million for construction projects at community colleges and universities, this year was no different. Instead, I focused my attention as a member of the Capital Budget Committee toward **lining up local projects to ensure funding for next year.** The groundwork is finished and I’ve set the following projects into motion for the next big funding cycle:

**McMillin Reservoir Trail Project** — This project would create 3.1 miles of trails along McMillin Reservoir and adjacent to Hunt Elementary School. It would include chain link fencing along some of the more sensitive areas of the trail, picnic tables, park benches and parking.

**Northwest Trek Wildlife Park** — Acquisition dollars for 100 acres of land along the park’s northern border to ensure the pristine nature of the Trek experience.

**Boys and Girls Clubs** — This plan would fund local community centers in the South Sound region, beginning with one on South Hill.

**Bridge for Kids** — This would provide an emergency footbridge across the Carbon River that would allow Orting School students to reach higher ground much quicker in case of a mudflow or eruption of Mt. Rainier.

# 2004 Legislative Report

## Providing safe communities

No more essential duty of government exists than to protect the lives of its citizens. Here are several actions taken for the safety of our neighborhoods and communities:

**Child-rape laws:** I co-sponsored and we approved HB 2400 which makes it harder for sex offenders who victimize children to get suspended or shortened sentences by enrolling in a treatment program. *(Unfortunately, the Legislature stopped short of the original bill that would have imposed tough mandatory prison sentences and provided for treatment behind bars.)*

**Coaches who prey:** Legislation I supported and co-sponsored requires school districts to share information about child sex abuse by former and current employees.

**Domestic violence:** Four domestic violence bills were signed into law, including one that requires all law enforcement agencies to adopt by June 2005 minimum policies for handling police-involved domestic violence.

## Tax relief

Protecting taxpayers and creating jobs are among my top priorities as your state representative. I'm pleased to report we approved several important tax relief bills:

**Tax incentives for jobs:** We renewed two tax breaks for high-tech research and development companies which provide high-wage jobs. We also approved a temporary business tax break aimed at saving jobs at aluminum smelters, a sales tax exemption for computer equipment used in printing and publishing, and an extension of the state ban on local taxation of Internet service providers.

**Senior citizen property tax break:** I supported legislation that will now allow about 18,000 more elderly and disabled property owners to qualify for a property tax break. The measure increases income eligibility to \$40,000 a year for seniors and disabled people who want to defer portions of their property taxes. It also exempts the homeowner from all excess levies if their income is between \$30,001 and \$35,000. Those with lower incomes can exempt portions of regular property tax levies.

Rep. Roger Bush with legislative pages Nicole Burgard (left) of Puyallup, and Emily Rose Sherman of Spanaway. Both are students at Spanaway Junior High School



## More health care options

We took action to help small businesses with 50 or fewer employees offer their workers a lower-cost, no-frills package of health care benefits. Businesses have struggled with premium increases of nearly 30 percent a year. *(Unfortunately, meaningful changes we proposed were abandoned by the Democrat-controlled House.)* While the legislation that passed was not all we had hoped for, it is a small step forward toward helping people and small businesses.

## Tort reform - a missed opportunity

One of the biggest disappointments of the session was the inability to come to agreement on meaningful liability reform. The lack of true tort reform will result in more doctors leaving the state or discontinuing services, and will put more strain on patients who need care. The Senate-approved package of comprehensive liability and medical malpractice reform came to the House where the Democrat majority, at the urging of trial lawyers, would not allow the bills to move. The only measure they would allow to pass is a bill that blocks lawsuits charging that a restaurant or fast-food outlet caused obesity. You can be sure liability reform will be on the front burner next year.

# Rep. Roger Bush

## Governor vetoes primary election bill, limits your choices

The only thing more disappointing than the courts throwing out Washington's blanket primary system is the veto Gov. Locke stamped on the primary election bill passed by the Legislature. We struggled to replace the court-ousted blanket primary with something as near to it as possible. We wanted to preserve your choice without

making you declare a party allegiance. The closest system we agreed to was a "Top 2" primary, in which the two people who get the most votes in September face off in November.

Also realizing that it might be challenged in the courts, we provided a Montana-style fallback. This would have voters privately pick a single party's ballot in September and choose only among that party's candidates.

When the measure reached the governor's desk, he vetoed the Top 2 section, leaving the Montana-style party ballot as Washington's new primary system.

### State Representative Roger Bush

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Dear friends,

Although it was a short 60-day session, it was also very intense. Much of the session focused on a primary election replacement, the budget, jobs, tax incentives, tort reform and many small, but very important issues.

This newsletter provides highlights of the 2004 legislative session.

I appreciate the honor of serving you. Should you have any suggestions, questions, comments or ideas about state government, please contact me at my office.

Sincerely



Roger Bush  
State Representative

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